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ABSTRACT

Four commercially available instructional software programs for high school journalism students are examined in this paper, which also contains suggestions on their use. The four programs reviewed in the paper provide (1) practice in finding the best interview sources in a newsgathering simulation (Super Scoop); (2) review and reinforcement of grammar skills in a news-editorial game setting (The Grammar Examiner); (3) use of a utility program--a tool--to create computer graphics and actual layouts of 8 1/2 x 11- or 8 1/2 x 14-inch pages (The Newsroom); and (4) review of general knowledge in areas such as American history, government, and literature in a game format (Knowledge Master series). (HOD)

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COMPUTER SOFTWARE FOR SCHOLASTIC JOURNALISM

by

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Education Editor
Viewdata Corporation of America

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

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CS209202

Microcomputers in American high schools are today finding homes and uses in more than the mathematics, science and computer programming courses. Benedict found that scholastic journalism programs are buying microcomputers to help produce student publications. (1)

The dominant microcomputer in American schools is Apple, with 50.9 percent of this market in 1984. (2) Radio Shack is second with 19.7 percent; Commodore is third with 15.2 percent. IBM, generally more expensive than any of the other machines, has just 3.5 percent, but is aggressively pursuing school connections. Other brands, such as Atari, together have 10.7 percent of the market.

While the focus of scholastic journalism is to produce a publication, the presence of microcomputers in the scholastic journalism means that they can be used for instructional purposes as well. But what instructional software is available for high school journalism students? How can it be used in the classroom?

This paper will look at several commercially available programs that offer a variety of activities for the scholastic journalism student and make suggestions on their use.

The four programs to be reviewed provide:

- o practice in finding the best interview sources in a newsgathering simulation;
- o review and reinforcement of grammar skills in a news-editorial game setting;
- o use of a utility program (a tool) to create computer graphics and actual layouts of 8 1/2 x 11 or 8 1/2 x 14 inch pages;
- o review of general knowledge in areas such as American history, government, literature, etc. in a game format.

Super Scoop--Finding the best interview sources

If you want to teach students discrimination skills in deciding which source--an eyewitness, an expert source, or an authoritative source--to interview next for a particular story, Super Scoop may be just the program for you. Super Scoop simulates the process of gathering information for an investigative story.

In the simulation, you are a new reporter for the local paper who receives a phone call from Rob Porter, a union rep at the County Hospital. He tells you that a blood mismatch has resulted in the death of a woman in surgery and urges you to uncover the truth. He, of course, doesn't want his name used.

Students have 20 different sources to choose from and a limited amount of time. Each source who is interviewed has a different perspective, a varying quality of information, etc. After interviewing several sources, the student can go back to interview a source a second and even a third time for additional information. Some sources even say "call me back later and I'll have that information for you."

One of the beauties of this program is the way it imitates the real world: some sources don't want to talk to you because they were "burned" the last time they talked to a reporter from your newspaper. One source thinks that you are working on the wrong story and tries to give you a hot tip for the real story that needs to be covered in the community: acid rain. And when you are on deadline, with time at a minimum, you have to take an incoming call that may or may not prove

helpful.

All too quickly, your time to interview people ends, and you don't have all the answers. What can you write? Did you talk to sources who will go on the record and who are vital to the story? What legal and ethical concerns do you have?

College journalism instructors will find this a valuable newswriting exercise, while high school teachers may find that teaching students to take accurate and unbiased notes is another powerful use of this program. In either classroom, the teacher can use the program with the entire class, or can let students go through it individually or in small groups, with class discussion following.

The screens are extremely readable, as a large, attractive typeface is displayed instead of the all caps computer face that we often see on the Apple.

Using Super Scoop with high school students has only two drawbacks: 1) the subject matter--a possible blood transfusion mismatch at the county hospital--is not likely to be a topic for high school newspapers, in general; and 2) this program is available only on the Apple. A good teacher, however, will find it a powerful teaching tool with reporting students or with English students trying to write narrative accounts without using bias and reporting facts accurately.

Super Scoop comes with both a student's workbook and an instructor's guide. Both include chapters on the principles of journalism (what constitutes news, fairness, dealing with the reporter's emotions, off-the-record information, taking notes, validation of sources,

etc.); strategies and tips for general English classes who might use the program as a stimulus for writing an essay or an editorial; summarizing the legal and ethical issues involved; and evaluating news stories.

The instructor's guide also has valuable material: companion exercises and activities for the classroom, transcripts of all the interviews, and two stories written by reporters from the New Bedford (Mass.) Standard-Times.

Journalism instructors should know, too, that author Peter Owens suggests using Super Scoop to screen job applications. He asserts that an editor could make quick judgments about prospective reporters' abilities.

Owens is a professor of journalism and technical writing in the English department at Southeastern Massachusetts University and a writing coach for the Standard-Times of New Bedford. He was a reporter and editor with dailies and weeklies in Cape Cod and California, and Super Scoop is permeated with that experience. Owens earned both the master's and doctor's of education degrees at Harvard.

I wish that Owens' next product would be a Super Scoop Creator Program--a program in which I could create my own scenario, my own list of sources, and their interviews. Then each instructor could customize a situation appropriate to her students.

This single-disk program costs $65 and comes with one backup copy and one copy of the instructor's manual and the student manual. Additional student manuals cost $5.95 each.

Source: COMPress, A Division of Wadsworth, Inc., P.O. Box 102, Wentworth, NH 03282 (603) 764-5831

The Grammar Examiner--Reviewing grammar with a game

The inability to tailor Super Scoop for your students is overcome in The Grammar Examiner, a game that helps students review their knowledge of grammar, punctuation and capitalization. Here you can use the game as it is provided, or you can create your own game board and questions.

The Grammar Examiner simulates working for a newspaper, in that students work for bigger salaries and promotions. These are granted on the basis of the student's ability to edit copy and to answer questions correctly. Each reporter progresses up the job ladder by correctly editing paragraphs and answering multiple-choice grammar or spelling questions.

The documentation says: "Your Editor in Chief is a real stickler for grammar and punctuation. He plans to retire soon, and he's promised his job to the reporter whose work is most often free of mistakes." Students play on a game board, which can be totally revealed or partially concealed, presumably to make the game more challenging. They can land on three different kinds of "squares" on the game board. One asks students to choose the better of two sentences, and another requires students to edit a paragraph. A chance square increases or decreases salary without requiring any student answers; a question mark square will move the student's token to a grammar square somewhere on the board.

Four different game boards are provided so students can play more than

once. More than 150 multiple-choice questions and paragraphs are built into the program in areas such as punctuation, capitalization, subject-verb agreement, verb tenses, adverb and adjective usage and homonyms. These areas are subdivided into three grammar levels. The lowest level includes topics such as punctuation at the end of sentences, capitalization, subject-verb agreement, and verb tense. Level 2 includes Level 1 and 2 questions, and Level 3 includes all questions.

A student can play the game against Melvin the computer and can vary Melvin's IQ level from 0 (never gets anything right) to 200 (never misses a question).

DesignWare chose to use the Chicago Manual of Style and Warriner's English Grammar and Composition as the authoritative references on which to base their questions.

The disk is write-protected so that users will never accidentally overwrite the program and destroy their copy of the Grammar Examiner. However, you can create additional questions or additional game boards and store them on another disk.

The documentation tends to be easy to understand and terse. It includes about three pages of "general grammar and punctuation rules." It also shows the four built-in game boards. If you, like many people, don't bother to read documentation, you'll find a brief tutorial on the disk that will explain almost everything you need to know.

The disk is copy-protected, and no backup is provided. If an owner warranty registration card is on file, however, you may purchase a

back-up for $12.

Unfortunately, this program may bore your students before they finish the first game. Perhaps that's because the questions are for "ages 10 and above." The documentation claims that the paragraphs to be edited average eighth grade reading level and that the product is recommended for junior and senior high school students.

You may also question the goals of the game. While you try to advance from cub reporter to editor in chief, the winner of the game is the person who has the highest salary when someone becomes editor in chief. This means that the "winner" who becomes editor could actually lose the game. Everyone starts out at $20,000; the salary range is $10,000 to $60,000.

The greatest virtue of The Grammar Examiner is that you can write your own questions, tailoring them to your student's needs. An ambitious instructor could create questions including the unique spellings of her school as a way to use this program early in the publication cycle.

For the questions offering a choice of two sentences, you type in the incorrect sentence first, then the correct sentence. Each is limited to 39 characters. The paragraph to be edited can have 6 lines of 39 characters. After you type in the "unedited" version, you have the chance to type what corrections you expect. This is a relatively easy way to create your own computer-based drills.

I looked at the IBM PC version of the game, which requires a color/graphics monitor adapter and will not work with a monochrome

monitor. Versions for the Apple IIe and IIc and the Commodore 64 are also available. Other reviewers have commented that the Apple IIe and IIc versions have crude graphics. (3) Look at it before you buy, if possible.

Source: DesignWare, Inc. 185 Berry St. San Francisco, CA 94107
(415) 546-1866 or (800) 572-7767 $44.95

The Newsroom--Producing a newsletter

Chances are that one of your students owns this program now, because The Newsroom has been No. 5 or higher each week on the Billboard Home Management best seller list through the spring and summer. Mr. Chris Price of Springboard declined to say how many packages had been sold, but "it's A LOT in all caps," he said. (4)

The Newsroom, which combines an extensive library of clip art with word processing capabilities and pagination, allows a school with a relatively inexpensive computer such as the Commodore 64 and a dot matrix printer ($280 for my Epson RX-80) to produce "camera-ready" pages. Actual photographs can't be used, but mimeographed publications can't use photographs either.

I wish The Newsroom had been available when I was an adviser in Alma (Kan.) High School. We could afford mimeographed pages with some graphics and one or rarely two pages lithographed--so we could get photos in the paper and guarantee more sales. You can teach students to write good leads, to be aggressive reporters and to cover the school's news without having to pay a large printing bill, but using The Newsroom would make the finished product look better, though it

would be harder to produce if only one computer were available instead of four typewriters.

I created a page that displays the variety of options available in The Newsroom. This page is included as Exhibit A. While a horror chamber in terms of layout and design, this page does display the five typefaces and several graphic options available.

The user's manual provides easy-to-read information. Unfortunately, it doesn't always tell you everything you want to know to operate the program successfully. If you are willing to experiment and have the time to make mistakes and learn from them, you will not be frustrated. Don't expect to produce a newspaper in one setting, however, because it takes time to learn to use a software package as sophisticated as this one--and with as many features.

The graphics library has 109 different files with topics such as Aliens, Beasts, Cats, Dinosaurs, Maps, Men, People, Scary, Sports, Women and Workers. Two files of "Words" provide special typefaces for pre-set words such as Sale, Fashion, Party, Halloween, Music, and Warning! You can edit these images, by flipping them, adding text or drawing additional lines, using fill textures, and enlarging or reducing them. Using the "magnifying glass" option, you can choose to turn on or off individual dots, which means that you can make your own character set, if you want. You can also combine several graphics (a dog chasing a cat with thunderclouds in the sky) and save them.

The "Banner" option allows you to create a banner or nameplate for your publication.

Here's the process you follow: select a graphic image, alter it as you choose, and save it as a photo. Assemble photos and text into a "panel" about 4 inches wide and 2 1/2 inches high. The word processor will wrap text around photos or graphics. You can reposition a photo after you have typed the text, and the text will automatically reposition itself, though you may create a hole or lose copy if you make the graphic larger or smaller.

When you are finished, save that panel and create another one. An inside page for 8 1/2 x 11 production requires eight panels; a front page requires six panels and one banner. When you have created enough panels, you can lay out each page by determining which panels go into which positions on each page. After finishing one page and saving it, you go on to build the next page, or print out that page.

To print out a photo, a panel or a page, you only need to know the name of the printer you have and the interface card. About 50 different printers are supported, and about 40 different interface cards, so chances are great that you just indicate which ones you have and you're ready to print.

An option called The Wire Service allows the user with a modem to send or receive pages, photos, or copy between different computers. One student could work at home, for example, and send his panels to school on a day he was home with the flu--assuming he had a copy of The Newsroom to use at home. In addition, The Wire Service is expected to allow users of different machines (Apple, IBM PC and PCjr and Commodore 64) to talk to users on other brands. Although the disk for

an Apple will not run on an IBM or Commodore, the files can be transferred between machines, edited, and returned with changes.

The Newsroom documentation booklet contains "The Complete Guide to Creating a Newspaper," 18 brief pages of instruction, a glossary of terms, an annotated bibliography, and a list of proofreader's symbols. While brief, the instruction covers such areas as staff organization, interviewing strategies, library research, writing the story and headline, creating good photos, and laying out the page. Tightly and well written, the instruction here is excellent for the novice.

The drawbacks of the program are that it requires some disk swapping (you need to have a few initialized disks in addition to the two provided by the program, and the clip art is on both sides of one disk) and that the cursor movement is slow. Some will argue that slow cursor movement requires one to think carefully about what she is going to do next, without needing to use the OOPS option (which "undoes" the last thing done). Also, no backup disks come with the program. If somehow the master disk is ruined, you can get a replacement by sending $5 and the ruined copy back to the manufacturer; while it's in the mail, however, you can't do a thing with it.

The publisher stresses that this program is for high school students. You may find that junior high and middle school students will be quite happy to use it and that some high school students will think it is childish. Others will be delighted that this program allows the "nonartistic" to be so creative.

For the money, I think that this program provides valuable experience for students in experimenting with computer graphics and pagination techniques. When today's high school junior graduates from college in 1991, we can expect pagination to be relatively commonplace.

The Newsroom, produced by Springboard, is now available for the Apple IIe and IIc. A noninteractive demonstration disk is also available. An IBM PC version is coming out soon, a PC jr version will be out in about October, and a Commodore 64 version will be out before Christmas, Mr. Price said. (5)

The Newsroom costs $49.95. Springboard also sells a clip art library of 600 "more serious" illustrations for $29.95, and they will be releasing a library of 600 business illustrations soon, also $29.95.

Source: Springboard Software, Inc. 7807 Creekridge Circle, Minneapolis, MN 55435
(612) 944-3912 or (800) 328-1223.

Knowledge Master series--Computer-assisted testing

"Since we cannot know all that is to be known of everything, we ought to know a little about everything." --Blaise Pascal

In the sense that the journalism student needs to know a little about everything, I'd like to include a brief description of the Knowledge Master series here. Some enterprising high school journalism teachers will use this for a money-making activity, I'm sure.

Knowledge Master is a three-part package: 1) "Quiz Mode": an individual working against the computer; 2) "Competition Mode": two or more persons or teams alternating in answering questions; and 3) a bank of more than 40 disks of questions to be used by the first two

parts. The questions are in discrete categories such physics, chemistry, astronomy, geology, meteorology, biology, health, psychology, art, music, sports, current events and even building trades.

The quiz mode expects a typed answer to each question, but misspellings are not penalized. Students can review the questions they missed at the end of each round.

The Competition mode, which allows two students or two teams of students to play, asks individuals to press a key if they know the answer. (Each team has a different key.) Whoever presses the key first has 4 seconds to say the answer aloud. If he doesn't, a buzzer sounds, and the other team has 15 seconds to offer a different answer. Players then reveal the correct answer and award the score appropriately. If neither team gets it correct, the Great Auk gets the points.

The Great Auk is the mythical moderator of the questions. He personalizes the students' interaction with the computer.

Each topic has 400 questions representative of the skills and knowledge in a quality education for those in secondary school or college. The whole series retails for $720; individual disks are $27. Questions can be multiple choice, true/false, fill in the blank or short answer. The latter two are not scored by the computer; the correct answer is revealed and you are asked to record whether your answer was correct.

The demonstration disk, available for $5 or by sending in a blank disk, has the first two parts and a sampling of questions from each of

the 40-some categories. You can really use this demo to play the game in either mode, answering questions, not just watching the pages appear and disappear under computer control.

Two groups will be interested in this: "Trivial Pursuit" buffs who want to review (or play when there's only one other person around), and students who really want to review in academic areas.

The Knowledge Bowl series of 16 disks has only short answer questions in a variety of categories, "practically anything of academic significance," their literature says. They can be used to stage academic competitions. I can envision a high school publications staff hosting a "Knowledge Bowl" assembly, charging admission, and awarding prizes to the winners--retaining the profits for publications expenses. Eight disks with 3200 questions cost $168. One school district had teams of professionals compete against the team representing the school: they had motorcycle dealers, school administrators, mass media reporters and editors, carpenters, and the school board compete against the students. This garnered media coverage and much community involvement. Several Computerland stores on Florida's west coast sponsored competitions at 48 schools in the area last year.

Once you've bought the demonstration disk, you are free to make as many backup copies of it as you want. However, the actual programs are not to be copied. The manual states:

> The programs and questions are all copyrighted and there is a serial number embedded on each disk. Mother Auk and her auklets have spent a googol of hours preparing these disks and will be forced back into bleak extinction if the evil pirates start making

> copies. Attempts to make unauthorized copies may cause machines to melt and needlessly invite an irrevocable curse upon the families of would-be pirates unto three generations.

A school may get an unlimited copying license agreement for $200, however.

If your disk fails, it can be replaced for free for the first year; after that, it will cost $10.

Academic Hallmarks also sells a utility disk ($35) for those who want to create their own questions, edit the existing questions, or even create a printed test from some of the questions.

No disk is currently available for journalism or mass media type questions, although a Current Events disk was just released during the summer. Bob Sauer, president of Academic Hallmarks, is interested in finding people to write questions all the time, and he believes that teachers write the best questions.

Source: Academic Hallmarks, P.O. Box 998, Durango, CO 81301
(800) 321-9218 or (303) 247-8738

How Can These Programs Be Used?

Each of these programs presents a unique way of adding value to the presence of the microcomputer in the high school journalism class. Some can be done individually or with small groups. Some can be used with the entire class, if the teacher can project the screen image on a large monitor.

Each of these programs is inexpensive enough that schools can afford it.

For the money, The Newsroom is the best purchase of the four, and if I

could afford only one program, that would be the one I'd buy. Why? As a tool, it allows me to teach many different things in diverse ways. I can teach about graphics and typography; I can teach about layout; I can teach about fitting words with pictures. Best of all, students can experiment and easily see what something would look like--without having to do lengthy pasteups. Graphic designers who have experience working with print publications and begin working with computer graphics find that they can take more risks; they try many different ways of doing something and spend a little time figuring out how a different size typeface would look or how the picture would be if it were flipped or slightly reduced.

But using the computer as a teaching tool may require some changes from the conventional methods teachers use. If a single computer is tied into production of student publications, it's unlikely that programs with an individual focus will be used. If, however, a school is equipped with many terminals, such as the 62 available to John Marshall High School students, the possibility of creatively using computers for teaching appears. (6)

ENDNOTES

1. Mary Benedict, The Computer Connection: Putting Computers to Work in High School Publication Programs. Bloomington, Ind.: High School Journalism Institute, 1985, 66 pp.

2. These figures come from Market Data Retrieval, a market research firm in Westport, Conn.

3. John A. Barry, "Righting Your Writing," A+ Magazine, May 1985 p. 49-50, 53.

4. Telephone conversation July 12, 1985.

5. Telephone conversation July 12, 1985.

6. Benedict, p. 38.

EXHIBIT A

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

AEJMC Times

Editor: Rita Oates

A demonstration of The Newsroom

You can use large type

In serif, sans serif or English typefaces. As you type in the text, the words will automatically wrap themselves from line to line. You can delete a letter using the DELETE key. The text is automatically inserted wherever the cursor sits.

You can choose only two different type faces in each panel. This panel has sans serif large and sans serif small.

No paragraphing is provided, but you can type in blank characters or move the cursor with the arrow keys.

If you move the cursor with the arrow keys, you will see a hand after two presses of the arrow key.

"WOW," he said.

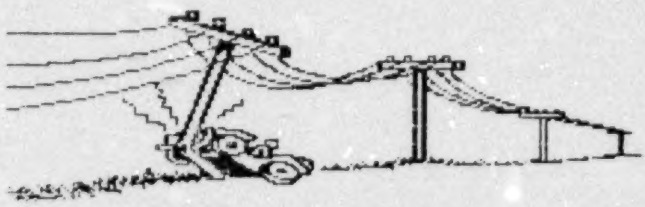
"I can use large English type, or small serif type with this program. I can even combine pictures and words!

"Of course, all caps English type is almost unreadable, but it sure looks neat when you type WOW."

A word from the maker

SPRINGBOARD

7807 Creekridge Circle
Minneapolis, MN 55435 (612) 944-3912



You can even enter cutlines under "photos" like this one.

Don't despair; The Newsroom is here!

Please excuse the lack of typographical quality and design standards in this publication. I seek to show you the variety available.

Scholastic journalists will like this program

That's a safe prediction, because this program is fun to use. You can see immediately the results of flipping a graphic, or how type flows with a picture, or what a fill texture does to a graphic.

It's easy to "undo" the last thing you did, and it's easy to enter text in the word processor available in the Copy Desk.

My major complaint is that you have to keep swapping disks in and out of the second drive. You should use four disks to keep track of your work, and the clip art disk has to be flipped to get all the clip art available. If you have sloppy students, that could ruin your work.

As a policy, I like to work from backups of the original disk instead of the original. That way, when I do something that I shouldn't, I don't ruin a good disk. So I wish that The Newsroom would either allow a backup OR would provide a backup when you buy the program. I realize that they are concerned about pirates who wouldn't buy a copy, but I'm convinced that pirates would be able to get a copy somehow.

All of the text from the sans serif headline in this column down was creatd in two separate "panels." This page has a banner panel (the nameplate) and six panels, three in each of the columns. You cannot choose to change the column width but you can have the page either 11 or 14 inches high. You wouldn't have the banner on inside pages, of course.